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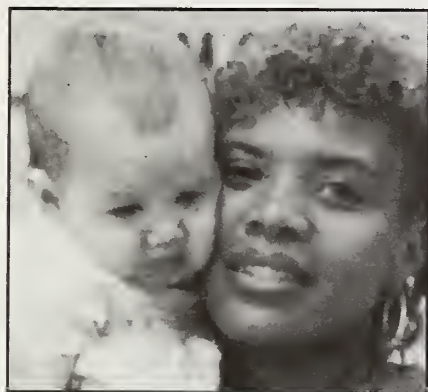
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Helping Families With Special Needs



"Together we can accomplish a lot..."

An Interview With Assistant Secretary Catherine Bertini



In this issue of *Food and Nutrition*, we are pleased to introduce USDA's Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, Catherine Bertini. She was nominated to the post by President Bush, confirmed by the Senate, and sworn in on October 10.

Bertini set the tone for her new task in remarks she gave at her formal swearing-in ceremony, November 3. She said, "Our challenge is to work together to improve delivery of services and insure basic nutritional support for those in need. I promise I will work aggressively and cooperatively. I hope I will work creatively and efficiently. Together we can accomplish a lot."

Bertini came to USDA from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), where she was Acting Assistant Secretary of the Family Support Administration. In that position, she had responsibility for a \$14-billion program.

From September 1987 to March 1989, she directed HHS' Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC), the country's largest cash assistance program, serving nearly 4 million families with needy children.

Bertini also has experience working in the private sector. From 1977 to 1987, she was with Container Corporation of America, managing public policy, as well as state and local public affairs and community relations.

Following is the text of an interview with Assistant Secretary Bertini.

Q How do you feel your experience at HHS will be of value to you here at USDA?

A One of the reasons Secretary Yeutter asked me to take on this responsibility was the 2 years I spent at the Department of Health and Human Services working in the area of welfare reform and managing the AFDC program.

In the coming years, we hope to achieve some conformity between HHS programs and food stamps. So I believe my background at HHS will be quite relevant.

I also served as the HHS representative on the White House Low-Income Opportunity Board. As an Assistant Secretary at USDA, I remain on that board, wearing a different hat.

I was very encouraged about achieving conformity when I went to a meeting of food stamp directors last November in Alabama. They were hopeful that my background in AFDC will facilitate conformity between AFDC and food stamps.

Of course, the issue of trying to make our programs conform has been on the table for a long time, but maybe we can do more to work out some of the differences.

Q What would be the reasons to bring programs together?

A There are several reasons. The first is to make more sense of the programs from the clients' perspective. The people who need these programs should have an easier time applying for and receiving benefits through them. That goes for food stamps, AFDC,

or any other assistance program.

And by making the programs more compatible, we help not only the clients but also the caseworkers and others who work with clients. Certainly, if the programs conformed, there would be less frustration and fewer obstacles for the caseworkers.

Making the programs conform would also save administrative costs. As part of our effort toward conformity, we're currently testing an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system in Baltimore. Clients use one plastic card to obtain benefits from food stamps, AFDC, child support enforcement, and other state public assistance programs.

HHS, USDA, and the Maryland Department of Human Resources are each paying a piece of the administrative costs for the system. The point is, if we can share these costs, there will be a savings for each of the agencies.

The same is true for the people who are delivering the services. If one person can handle two programs, then maybe we don't need two people to do the job. I'm not suggesting this is a way to cut back on employees. I do think, however, it's going to be a way to save some administrative costs over the long term.

To get back to my experience at HHS, I'll mention that I did a lot of work with interest groups—advocacy groups and others. Of course, this will be relevant to what we do here at USDA.

At HHS, I also gained valuable experience writing regulations for welfare reform. This was very instructive both in terms of getting involved in depth in the issues and in working cooperatively with a lot of folks from interest groups, states, and federal agencies.

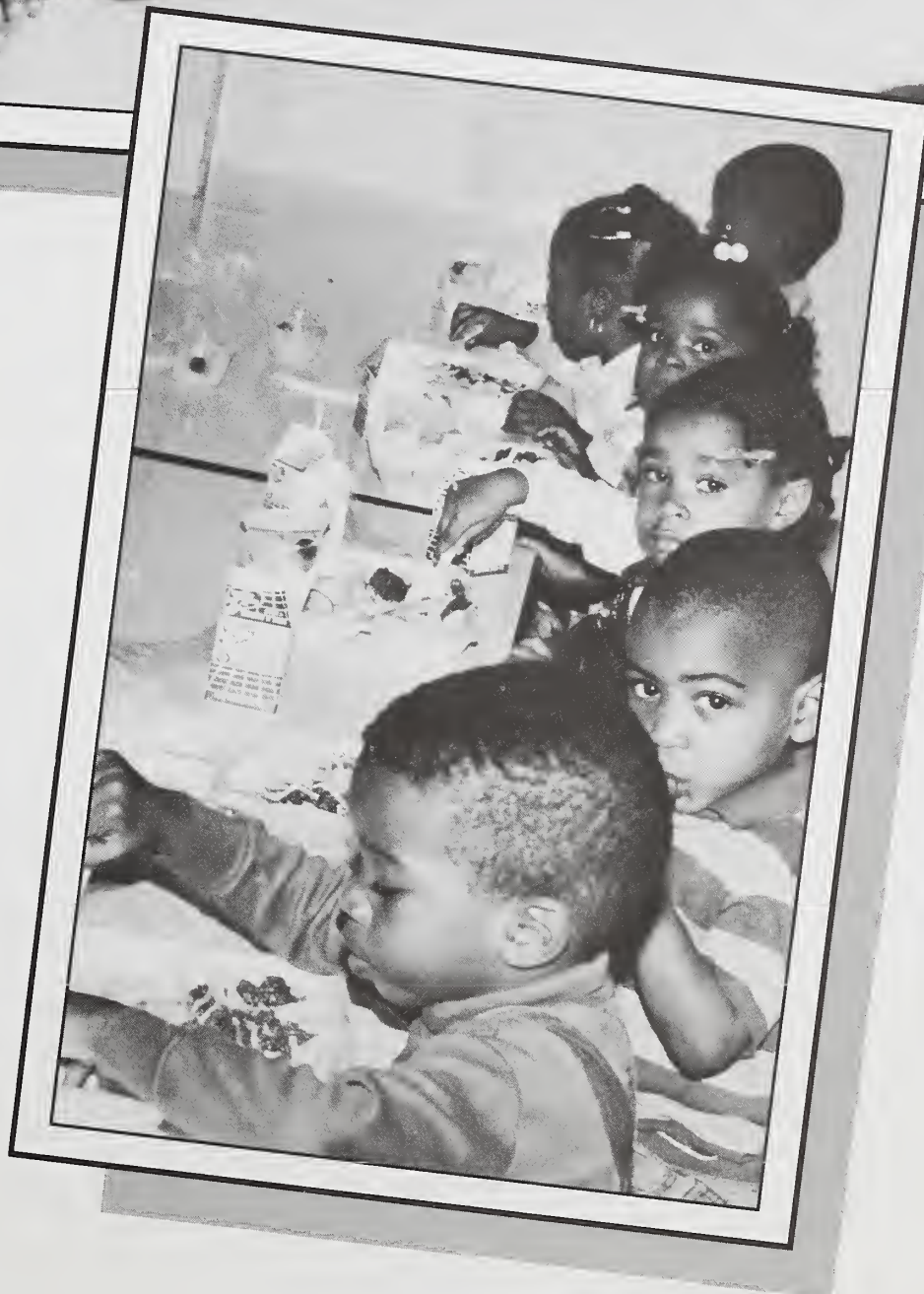
Q What is your preferred style of management?

A In terms of style or method of operating, when we talk about difficult issues, we need to have everybody at the table who needs to talk about them. For instance, when we talk about conformity among programs, we're not going to just talk about it at USDA or in the Bush Administration; we're going to talk about it with the

Above: Assistant Secretary Catherine Bertini talks with a student at Van Ness Elementary School in Washington, D.C. during a lunchtime visit to the school. Van Ness is one of several schools Bertini has visited in the Washington area and in other parts of the country.



"Our challenge is to work together to improve delivery of services and insure basic nutritional support for those in need. I promise I will work aggressively and cooperatively. I hope I will work creatively and efficiently. Together we can accomplish a lot."



Last fall, Assistant Secretary Bertini toured the Greater Chicago Food Depository, a non-profit agency that distributes food donated by USDA as well as by private donors. Here, agency staff show Bertini some freeze-dried cauliflower donated by a food company.

states and with Congress, and with other interested people.

When we talk about employment and training performance standards, we're going to talk about them with Labor and HHS and with states, not just among ourselves. When we talk about nutrition monitoring, that's an issue between the Human Nutrition Information Service (HNIS), HHS, FNS, the Hill, plus the interest groups.

The thing I'm most proud of in my 2 years at HHS is the rule we issued to implement the AFDC work program. It's known as the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Program (JOBS). We've had a great deal of compliments about that, even from people who don't agree with everything in the rule. They think it's a good product, and they applaud the process we used, which gave everybody a chance to have input.

I'm proud of that achievement—an excellent product created in a timely and open fashion. That's how I like to operate.

Q Can you tell us a little about your background and how you came to be involved with service programs?

A I became interested in public service when my father was first elected to the city council in Cortland, New York. I was 13 when I went with him to city council meetings and, of course, whatever my father's position was on whatever issue, I felt his was the only correct position. That was my first exposure to government and politics.

At about the same time, my aunt was a nurse in the Air Force and some of her colleagues had been assigned to Vietnam. They came back on leave and told a group of us young people about all the needs of the poor citizens of Vietnam.

They told of how, on their off-duty hours, U.S. medical personnel would go into the villages to try to help the civilians, but it was difficult because they didn't have basic supplies—like soap. They had already received donated medical supplies, but they needed soap to help people improve their sanitary conditions.

A group of us organized a "soap drive" at school and by one means or

another, we collected mounds and mounds of it. I think the nurses were overwhelmed with all the soap we sent.

That was one of the first things I did that made me realize there were people who needed help, and I was interested in helping them.

When I was still a teenager, I had the opportunity to manage two summer youth employment programs.

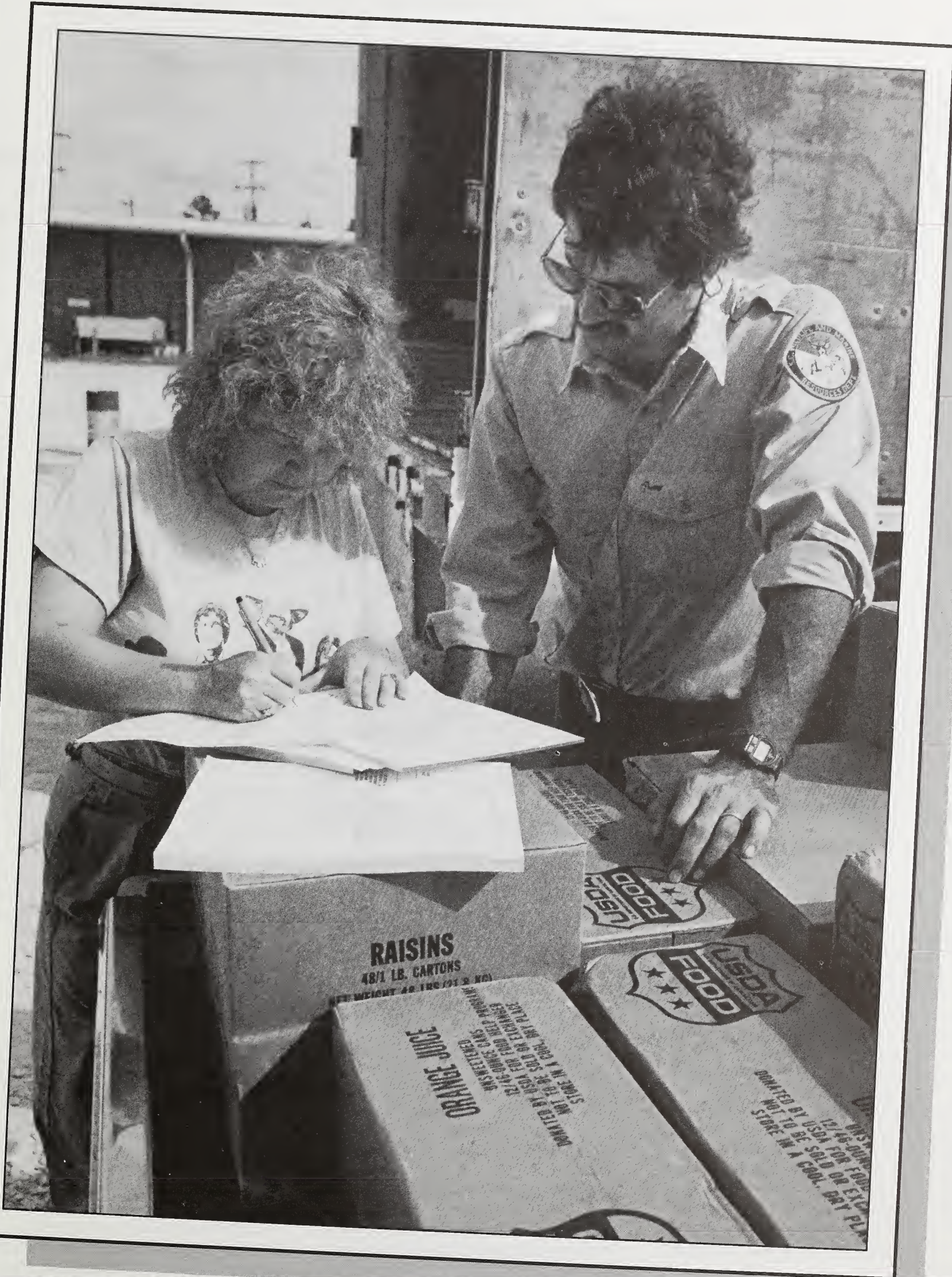
And years later, as an adult, I did a lot of volunteer work in Chicago. I served food at a homeless women's shelter and worked with young people in the inner city on job development and training in two different programs.

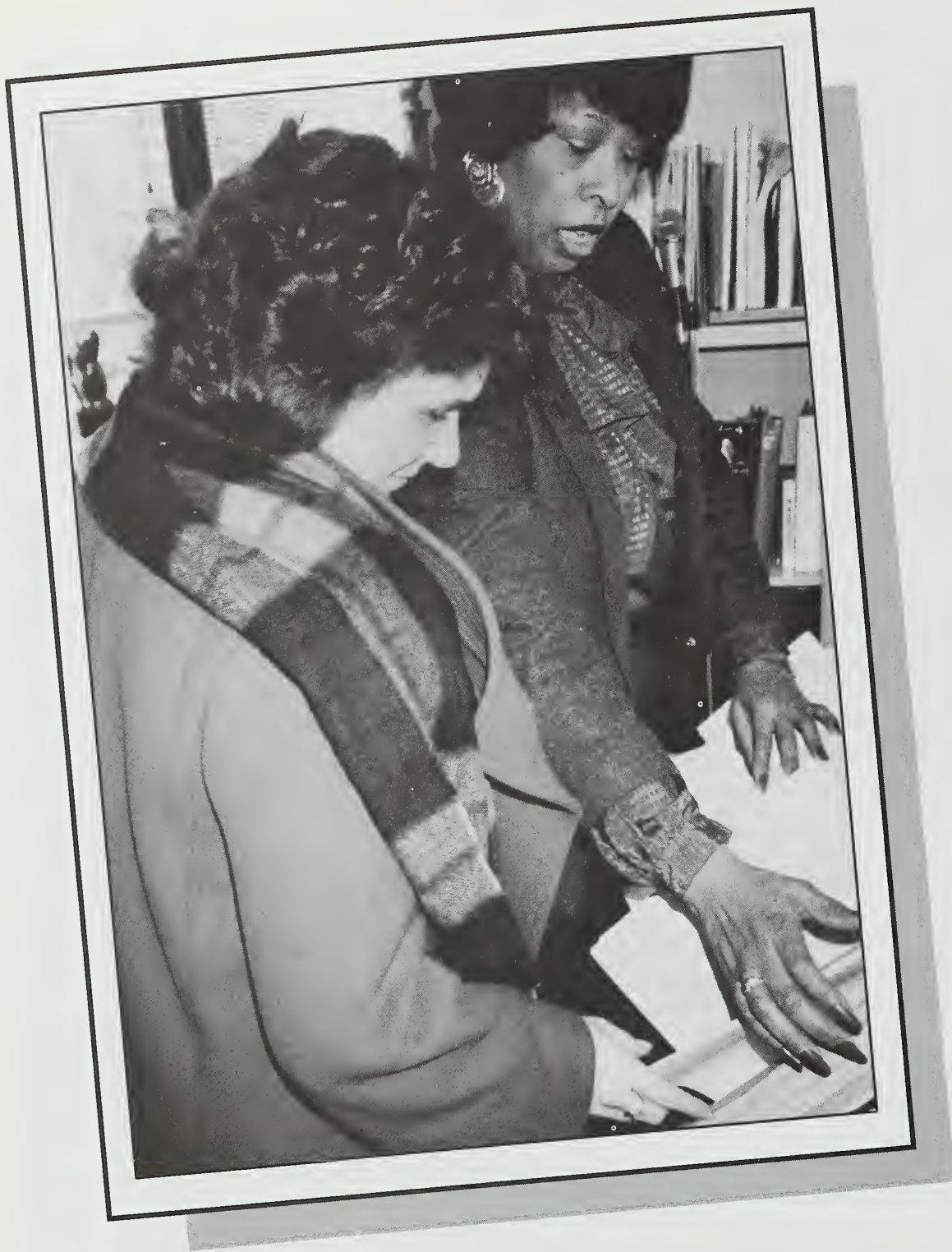
I also served on the Illinois State Scholarship Commission and on a board that looked into governance in the Chicago public schools. And I had the opportunity to serve the state as a commissioner on the Illinois Human Rights Commission.

I've been interested in programs that deliver a service for people for a number of years, and I was very lucky because the Reagan White House offered me the position of director of the Office of Family Assistance in the Department of Health and Human Services.



"...when we talk about difficult issues, we need to have everybody at the table who needs to talk about them. For instance, when we talk about conformity among programs, we're not going to just talk about it at USDA or in the Bush Administration; we're going to talk about it with the states and with Congress, and with other interested people."





"...although we're a very prosperous country, we still have millions of people in need of some basic support. I think the most important long-range challenge is to make sure the programs continue and to operate them well so that people don't go hungry."

Q Since the Bush Administration has been in office, it has been inclined to maintain the current level of federal support for food assistance programs. Do you think this trend will continue?

A Basically, I see the major programs continuing as they are. President Bush places a high priority on serving those in need.

Q As the Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, you are responsible for a massive food assistance effort that costs over \$23 billion a year. How does one approach such a monumental task?

A Well, there are 2,000 people in FNS, and many more at the state and local level, working on the programs. Often, they've worked on them for years and there's a lot of expertise, a lot of dedication. That's the number one reason why I feel confident about managing them.

I hope to give some direction to the programs and have President Bush's concerns be reflected both in how they operate and in the direction they are given.

Q When you spoke to the FNS staff on October 12, you asked them to be compassionate when dealing with program recipients. Will you elaborate?

A Sometimes when we look at an issue or program policy, the way we interpret that policy will reflect our primary objective for the program. For example, if our objective is to save money, we will make a policy decision one way. But if our objective is to be more accommodating to the clients, we will make our decisions differently.

When President Bush gave his inaugural address, he made his objectives very clear. He told us that although we have serious budget constraints, he still wants us to operate within the context of a "kinder, gentler America." To me, that means we should take a softer approach and lean in the direction of the clients, whenever possible.

One concrete example of what I mean is the issue of how we count the income that blind people get for the

Food and Nutrition



care and feeding of their seeing-eye dogs.

There are two ways to look at this issue. On the one hand, we can determine that *any* cash income, regardless of its purpose, must be counted as "income." This approach would cause a blind person to receive a smaller food stamp allotment.

The other approach says, yes, it's cash, but it's for the seeing-eye dog. And a blind person can't operate outside of home without a seeing-eye dog. Thus, the money should not be counted as "income" for purposes of calculating the amount of food stamps to be received.

There are other examples I could cite, such as the voucher system West Virginia uses once a year to provide needy children with clothes for school. In the past, USDA considered these vouchers as payments. Consequently, they reduced a family's food stamp allotment. Now, we call them annual "emergency payments," which don't count as income. This is what I mean

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by a softer, more compassionate approach.

Q What do you see as the major challenges that face the food programs in the coming years?

A The first challenge is to work for a time when there are no hungry Americans, at least none who are involuntarily hungry. Beyond that, we should work so that all citizens have a reasonable chance at having a nutritious diet.

Without the food assistance programs, we obviously would have a serious problem with hunger in this country. Because, although we're a very prosperous country, we still have millions of people in need of some basic support. I think the most important long-range challenge is to make sure the programs continue and to operate them well so that people don't go hungry.

Q What direction do you see the food assistance programs taking over the next 10 years?

Opposite page: While visiting a local food stamp office in Chicago, Bertini stops to talk with income maintenance supervisor Donna Clay. Above: At Massachusetts' North Quincy High School, with FNS regional administrator Harold McLean, she answers questions from a student who works on the school newspaper.

A I've already mentioned serving hungry people, but as a corollary, we need to look carefully at who is hungry in America and who is poor. I think the government has to insure we are serving that precise population.

And, when we look at the percentage of children who are poor in this country, we are looking at a very serious problem that has to be addressed in some very public and major ways.

I believe that many problems in our communities, such as drugs, crime, and teen pregnancies, can be partially attributed to the fact that we have neglected our children, to a large degree.

Q Have you had the opportunity to actually see some of the food assistance programs in operation?

A Yes, I've already eaten lunch at several schools, and I plan to visit at least one school each month.

The very clear message I got from eating lunch at school is that while we have an important job to assure that we are serving nutritious meals, we also have to make sure the food is attractive so that it will be eaten. Because unless these little people put it in their stomachs, what's on their plate is irrelevant.

I've had a chance to visit a number of WIC clinics and have seen how WIC operates. Certainly, I've heard rave reviews about the WIC program and how helpful it is to people.

I've applied for food stamps in Alabama. Of course, they pretended they didn't know I really wasn't eligible. But I learned lessons there, including how silly some of the application requirements are. We're trying to eliminate these where possible.

Q Has Secretary Yeutter given you any instructions regarding the food programs?

A Yes, but before I mention them, I want to say that the Secretary intimately knows the issues we deal with because in 1973-74 he was the

Assistant Secretary for Marketing and Consumer Services, with responsibility for food assistance programs. He's very interested in our success and in the continuation of the programs.

He is committed to the Food Stamp Program, and he actually opened the first WIC clinic in Pineville, Kentucky, in January 1974. We couldn't have a Secretary with a better understanding of what we're doing.

One of the challenges Secretary Yeutter has asked us to face is the issue of fraud in the Food Stamp Program. He wants us to do all that's required to fight fraud, and he wants us to consider what else we could be doing.

I told the FNS regional administrators recently I don't think being tough on fraud is inconsistent with taking a softer approach. Because with fraud, we're talking about people who are ripping off clients and taxpayers. We should be careful with eligible clients and intolerant with those who commit fraud.

And besides doing all we can to reduce food stamp fraud, the Secretary has asked us to work toward conform-

ity among programs wherever possible. I discussed this issue earlier.

Q Do you have anything you would like to say to the employees of FNS and HNIS?

A Yes. I'm proud and pleased to join you in your work because the roles we have are so important for this country. Whether the people we serve are children, babies, or other poor Americans, we have a great deal of responsibility to them. We have responsibility to run efficient programs, be creative in how we use federal dollars, be resourceful and willing in our response to natural disasters, and to be compassionate.

We also have the responsibility to reach all Americans to help them understand the nutritional value of food.

Our responsibility is to go beyond just operating the programs. We need to ask: How can we better outreach? How can we better tell people about what we're doing? How can we better package the programs with other programs so that the people we're serving get the best possible service and information?

*interview by Michael McAteer
photos by Pamela Faith,
Robert Nichols and FNS
Regional Staff*





"I'm proud and pleased to join you in your work because the roles we have are so important for this country. Whether the people we serve are children, babies, or other poor Americans, we have a great deal of responsibility to them. We have responsibility to run efficient programs, be creative in how we use federal dollars, be resourceful and willing in our response to natural disasters, and to be compassionate."



USDA food assistance programs serve millions of people of all ages. Opposite page and top photo: These South Carolina families were among the thousands who received emergency food help after their communities

were devastated by Hurricane Hugo. Above: A baby, who has participated in WIC since she was an infant, gets a hug from her mother as they wait to see the nutritionist at their local WIC clinic.

Looking For Opportunities And Creative Approaches

Deputy Assistant Secretary Birge Watkins Welcomes Challenges Of Public Service

"There are always opportunities," says Birge Watkins, USDA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services. "Too often we talk about problems and don't mention the opportunities."

Watkins is happy to be in a position to help find and develop opportunities "through creative issue analysis" and by opening his door to many diverse groups.

"Effective policy making should examine the 'big picture' to develop a deeper understanding of issues and a wide variety of options," he says. He feels it is especially important to consider interest group viewpoints within the parameters of overall Administration objectives.

"It gives us a chance to see what different groups are thinking. It doesn't mean we're always going to agree with them and accept everything they say. But give and take is vital to the policy process."

Participating in this process is what appeals to Watkins about public service. "Being able to work with problems at the national level is very exciting," he says. "That's what keeps drawing me to public service rather than to the business sector."

A fresh approach to management

His enthusiasm, coupled with his professional expertise and educational background, makes Watkins a welcome addition to the new management team at USDA. Along with Assistant Secretary Catherine Bertini, Watkins is bringing a fresh approach to managing the programs of the Food and Nutrition Service, the Human Nutrition Information Service, and the Office of the Consumer Advisor.

Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter echoed this sentiment when announcing his appointment. "Watkins'

management background and his Washington experience make a valuable combination which will serve the Department well," he said.

From his work on President Ford's White House staff, as a member of the Bush Transition Team, and as Assistant to the Administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Watkins knows how to get things done in Washington.

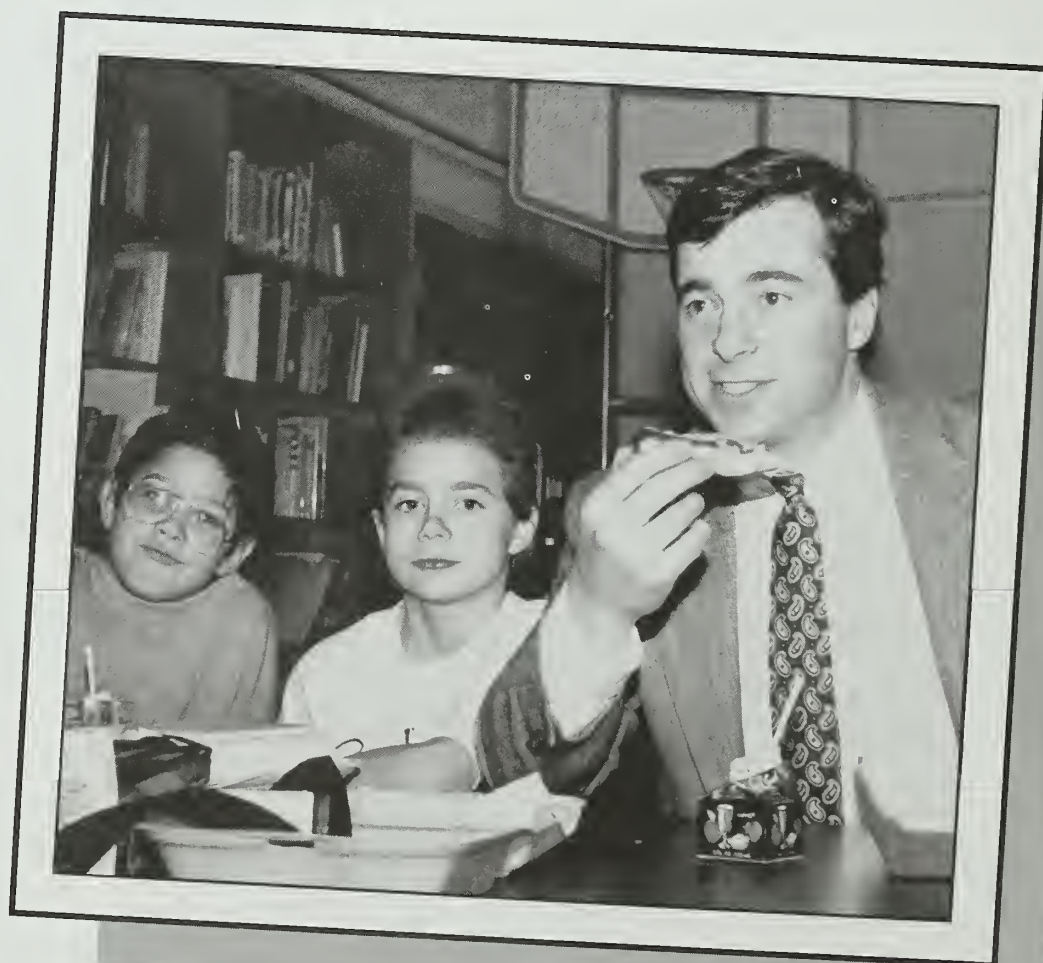
Although new to domestic food programs, Watkins' work in the international arena has made him very aware of hunger issues.

He was Assistant Director of President Reagan's Task Force on Interna-

tional Private Enterprise. He was also Deputy Assistant Director of the Office of International Training at the Agency for International Development. In those jobs he saw first-hand the immense hunger and agricultural problems of developing countries and learned much about food assistance abroad.

Believes in taking a broad perspective

Watkins feels his education is a great asset in his new job. He earned a master's of public administration degree from Harvard University and a master's of business administration from the London Business School.



"Both government and business schools teach you to take a broader perspective," he says. "They give you tools with which to view policy, budget, organization and management, finance, and marketing in the context of an overall strategy."

From his earlier years as an art major at Alma College, Watkins knows that the policy process is not unlike the creative process. "Sometimes developing policy options reminds me how many colors one has to choose from when painting a picture. The goal is to make the colors work well together."

This broad perspective has helped Watkins zero in on a couple of immediate goals. One is to expand possibilities of electronic benefits transfer in the Food Stamp Program. He feels this fits in with the longer goal the Administration has of improving access and security for food stamp recipients.

"This is an exciting area," says Watkins, "where interest groups play a major role. For example, we have to recognize how changes in technology are gradually changing the way grocery retailers do business. Then we can fashion an approach that addresses their concerns, meets recipients' needs, and follows Food Stamp Program goals."

Watkins serves on the policy group for the Interagency Council for the Homeless on behalf of Assistant Secretary Bertini. This, coupled with visits to a number of homeless shelters, has sparked a great interest for him in how USDA's food programs can better help homeless people, particularly families and children.

In addition to making food programs more accessible to the needy, Watkins wants to see more incentives built into them so that recipients can become self-sufficient in the long run.

And that gets back to providing opportunities for people. He wants to help recipients find ways to make good incomes. "The Employment and Training Program offered to food stamp recipients is one way of doing this," he says.

"Balancing the needs of all people," says Watkins, "is the challenge I face and welcome as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services. I'm very glad to be here."

*article by Bonnie W. Polk
photo by Marian Wig*

While visiting food programs in the Northeast, Birge Watkins joins students for lunch at an elementary school in Philadelphia.

Bringing A Special Perspective To The Food Programs

Wisconsin State Legislator Betty Jo Nelsen Is New Administrator Of FNS



FNS Administrator Betty Jo Nelsen at a press conference on food distribution.

Another member of the new management team at USDA is Betty Jo Nelsen, who earlier this year was named administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

Nelsen came to FNS from the Wisconsin Assembly. Elected in a special election in 1979 and reelected biennially, she served on 20 committees during her 10 years in the state legislature.

As a member of the Joint Finance Committee, she was one of 16 legislators responsible for developing the state's \$11-billion annual budget. She was minority leader of the assembly from 1987-88 and during that time served on the Welfare Reform Commission.

Prior to holding elective office, Nelsen coordinated the Milwaukee Voluntary Action Center Involvement Corps, where she was responsible for all aspects of a pilot program linking corporate sector volunteers with nonprofit agencies seeking voluntary help.

She also served as president of the

Junior League of Milwaukee; chaired the Agency Evaluation Committee for the United Way of Greater Milwaukee; and was program manager of volunteers with the Milwaukee County Department of Public Welfare.

A graduate of Dedham (Massachusetts) High School, she earned a bachelor's degree in education with a major in food and nutrition from Massachusetts State College, Framingham. Immediately after graduation from college, she taught junior high school in Omaha, Nebraska.

In announcing her appointment as FNS administrator, Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter said, "Betty Jo Nelsen brings a wide range of legislative and public service experience to this vital post and will be a valuable asset to the USDA team."

"Active in welfare reform efforts in Wisconsin, she has demonstrated long-standing interest in the health and welfare of those who are served by FNS programs."

photo by Pamela Faith

Winning With Summer Meals

New Castle Has Food For Kids, Jobs For Teens

If summer meals taste a bit like home cooking to kids in New Castle, Delaware, it may be because an older brother or cousin or next door neighbor helped make them.

In an arrangement that benefits teens needing work as well as children needing nourishing food, lunches for the Summer Food Service Program are prepared by teenagers hired by the county through the U.S. Department of Labor's Job Training Partnership Act Program (JTPA).

Summer mornings begin early for the Manpower Youth teens. By 6 a.m. each weekday, they are already start-

ing to arrive at William Penn High School's cafeteria for a long day of baking, cooking, assembling, packing, and delivering breakfasts and lunches to Delaware's neediest children. Last summer, these young workers prepared meals for 2,500 New Castle youngsters at 140 sites throughout the county.

Sponsored by local agency

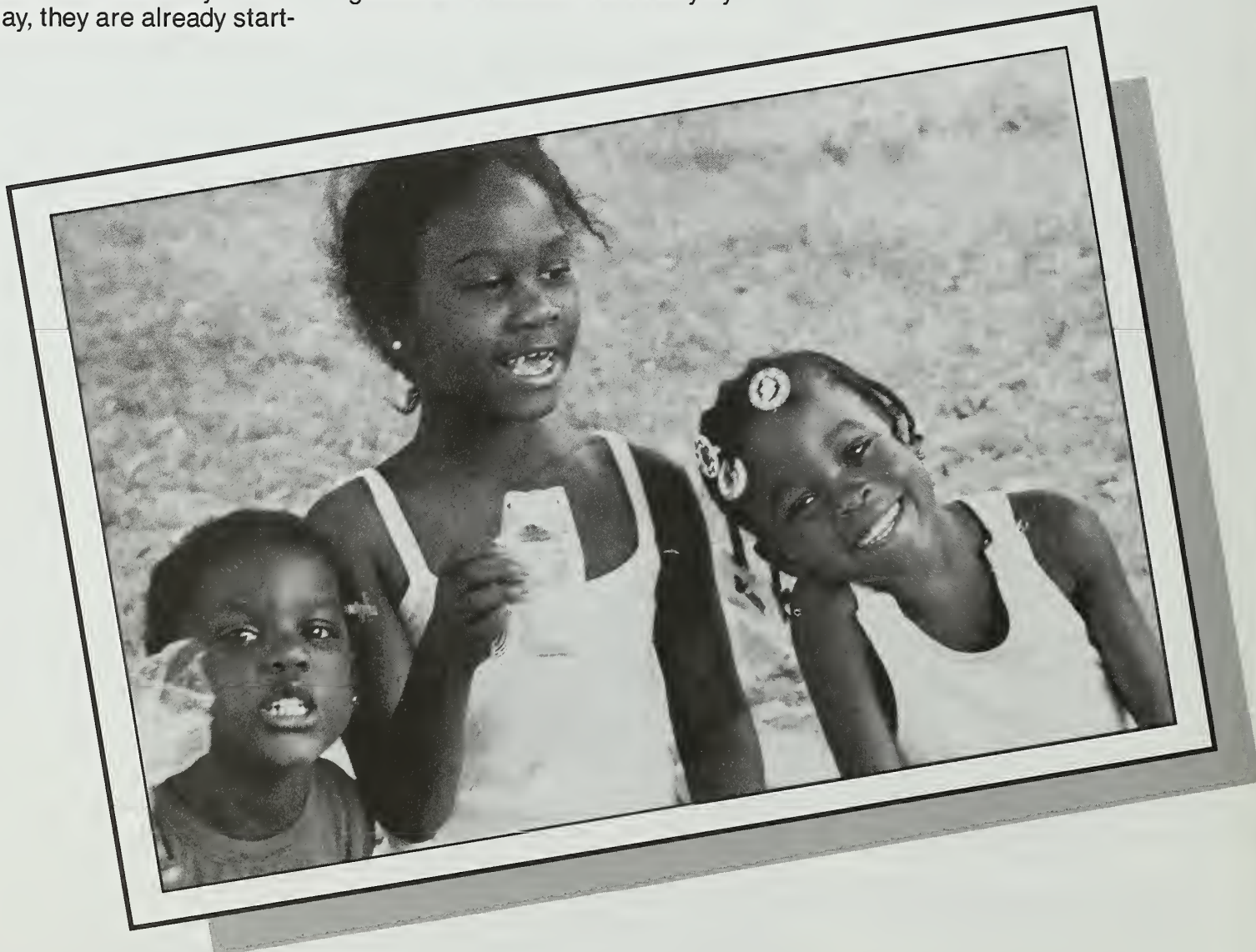
The Summer Food Service Program is one of several child nutrition programs administered nationally by

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service in cooperation with states and qualifying local sponsors.

Summer program sponsors include local municipal or county governments, public or private nonprofit school food authorities, community agencies, churches, day camps, institutions providing day care for the handicapped, and residential camps.

Targeted to low-income areas, the summer program seeks to ensure that needy children get well-balanced meals while school is not in session. As in the National School Lunch Program, meals follow federal nutrition guidelines.

About 20 JTPA youths worked as meal preparers for New Castle's summer program last year. Together, they ran the only self-preparation center in Delaware. Ranging in age from 14 to 20 years old, they were paid minimum wage through the JTPA. The program offered them a chance to make money over the summer, but they gained much more. They learned respect for authority, adults, and each other.





"Mother Mary" Shockley (above), a grandmother whom the children know and respect, volunteered to watch the children while lunch was served at Brookmont Farms last summer. Brookmont Farms is one of several summer food program sites in New Castle.

Gladis Reese has been head of the kitchen for this program for 15 years. She claims this is her last year but has been saying this for the last few years. Reese has seen the program grow from 300 lunches to over 2,500. She has also seen many of her JTPA youth workers come and go. "You have to believe in the program for it to work, and it does work with teamwork," she says.

Teens have grown along with program

With feeling Reese recounts the years and the special kids who have worked for her. "This program helps not only the low-income but the handi-

"Drink your milk," encourages an older brother, who has taken time out to make sure this young boy gets to Brookmont Farms for lunch. Summer meals, like school lunches, follow USDA nutrition guidelines.

capped as well," Reese says. "It gives them a chance to be self-sufficient."

Last summer, Reese had a number of handicapped youths working for her. For example, Travis Hosey was confined to a wheelchair and used sign language to talk to his friend Steven Thomas, who was deaf. William, a paraplegic with a heart condition, was Gladis' "top banana" for 4 years. He now works at a medical center and drives his own car.

Mario, who had no hands, had special fingers made for him. He wanted to be an opera singer and often sang while he worked. Reese says they all watched him win first prize in a talent show at the Delaware State Fair one year for singing his original composition while accompanying himself on the piano.

"There's not a kid I can't handle," says Reese. "If they come in with a chip on their shoulder, they leave without one. These kids know we care for them. Even if I holler at them, they know it's because I care."

Suzanne Burnette, summer food director for New Castle County, says the program started 15 years ago serving lunch only to the JTPA youth at work sites and then branched out into the communities where there were many children needing meals.

"Open sites" serving the free meals are set up in communities where 50 percent of the students receive free or reduced-priced lunches during the school year. At other sites, eligible children are enrolled in the program; eligibility is determined primarily by household income.

Parents sometimes help supervise

Burnette prefers to do outreach in communities that are most disadvantaged. She also tries to have parents within the community volunteer their time to supervise at the sites.

That goes for grandparents, too. For example, last summer at Brookmont Farms, "Mother Mary" Shockley, a grandmother whom all the children know and respect, volunteered to watch over the kids while lunch was served. She says she enjoyed her work and would like to do it again this year.

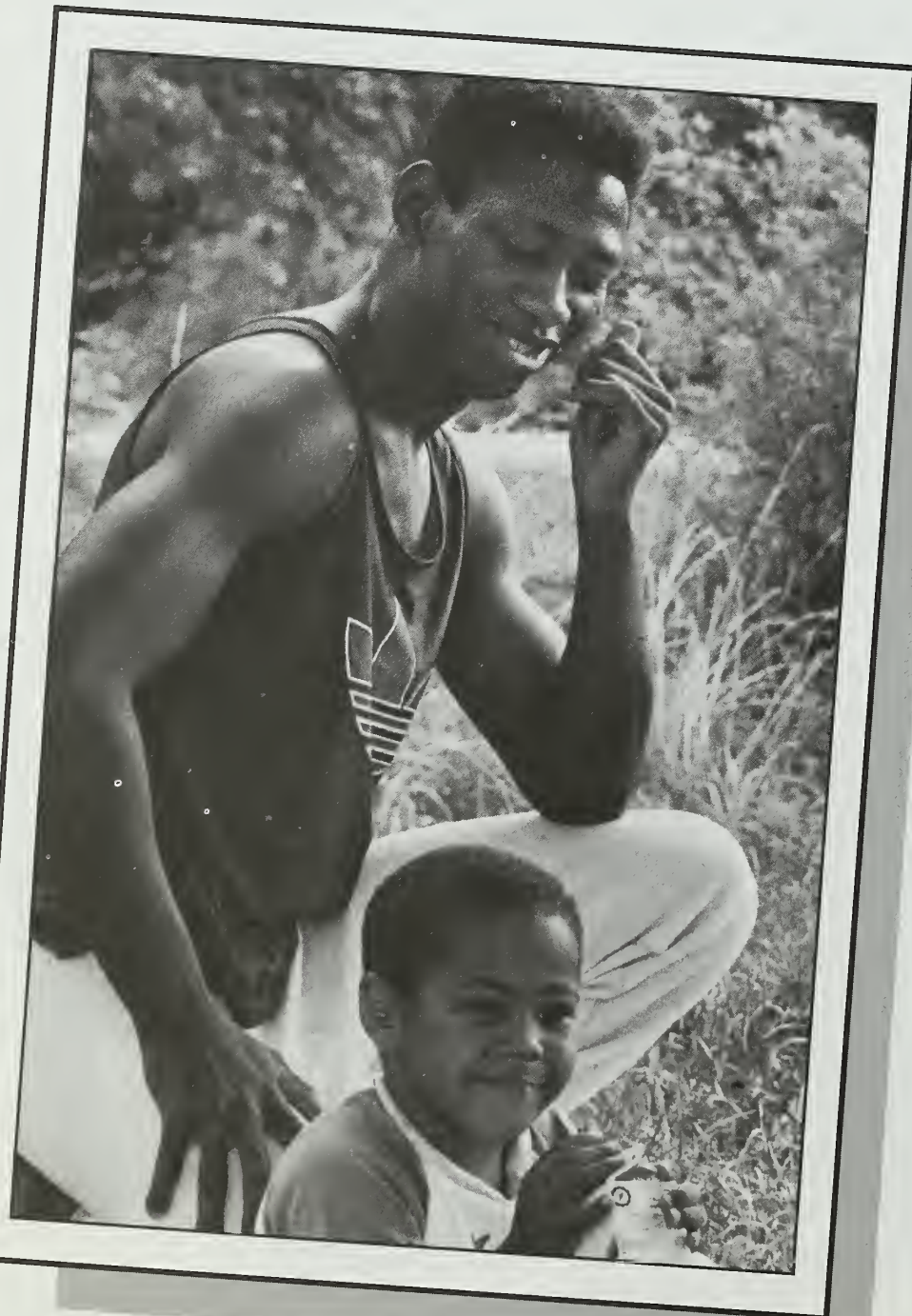
At many New Castle sites, a variety of activities—such as story reading, sports, and arts and crafts—give the children a chance to learn some new things.

Helping with summer meals is also a learning experience for the teens. "This is the first job for most of the kids," says Nancy Ford, state specialist with the Summer Food Service Program. "These kids are important, and the program keeps them off the streets."

Food for children, jobs for teens. In New Castle, Delaware, it's a winning combination.

For more information, contact:
Nancy Ford
Summer Food Program
Department of Public Instruction
Townsend Building
Dover, Delaware 19901
Telephone: (302) 736-4718

*article and photos
by Kim Jabat*



Working To Heal As Well As Shelter

Boston's Pine Street Inn Is Beacon Of Hope To Many

"How are you today, Mr. Jones?"

Conversation. Simple, courteous, and humane. A welcome respite from the isolation of life on the streets.

Staff and volunteers at the Pine Street Inn in Boston, Massachusetts, greet homeless men and women by name. They know that as much as their "guests" need shelter, they also need respect, kindness, and a basic affirmation of their individual worth and dignity.

The Inn, a converted firehouse, is easily recognized by its brightly lit tower beckoning the city's homeless to safety and shelter.

Meals and other services provided

An emergency shelter run by a private nonprofit organization, the Pine Street Inn and its satellites provide 880 beds every night for single adult men and women. Largely through the support of its volunteers, the Inn also serves two meals a day, 7 days a week, to more than 1,600 persons.

More than 120 volunteer groups donate or help with meals. Food help also comes from USDA's Food Distribution Program, which provides approximately \$2,000 worth of staple commodities each month.

In addition to food and shelter, Pine Street has an on-site clinic to tend to immediate health needs and assist with medical or psychiatric referrals. The Inn also provides clothing (primarily donated) 5 days a week to approximately 370 men and women per day.

The road back from homelessness is a hard one. Sheltering is only a part of the solution, says John Rood, community relations associate for Pine Street. "Our whole focus is to get people out of this mode of coming in here to a virtual warehouse and sleeping. What we are looking to do is create smaller transitional programs aimed at specific groups."

The homeless population is varied—ranging from formerly institutionalized

mentally ill men and women to mothers and children forced out of homes and apartments because of rising rents or personal crises such as divorce, loss of job, or illness.

Pine Street has put into place three programs to reach homeless people with various needs. They are: the work rehabilitation program; the permanent housing program; and Pine Street's newest program—Celeste House for women and children. FNS programs play a supportive role in each.

Beginning the transition to housing

The work rehabilitation effort is called the Live-In Staff Program. It currently serves approximately 40 men and 15 women, most of whom have a long history of substance abuse or mental illness.

Pine Street's tower (left of the tallest skyscraper) shines brightly in the night.



"The program gives them a chance to reverse the circumstances that brought them to the shelter," says Rood. "It is the first step in the transitional process of going from the shelter environment to permanent housing."

Placement in the program is done on an individual basis, and work assignments are individually paced according to ability. Typical work assignments include making beds, serving meals, and cleaning. In exchange, Pine Street provides a room, meals, an hourly stipend, and counseling to help participants with addictions or mental illness.

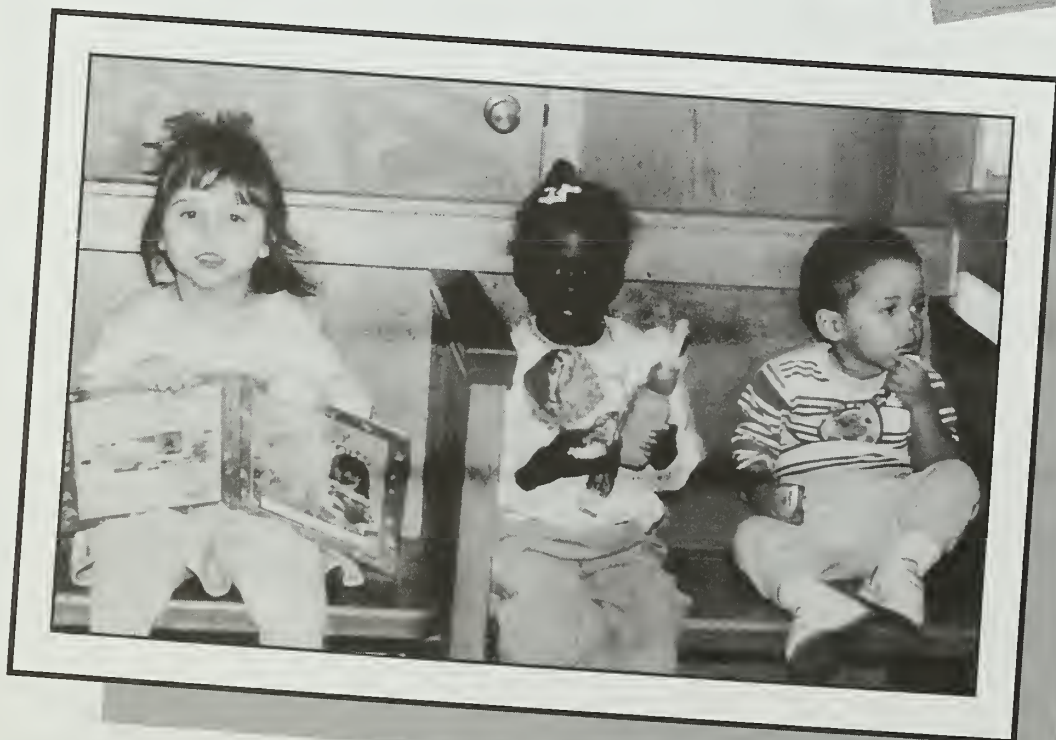
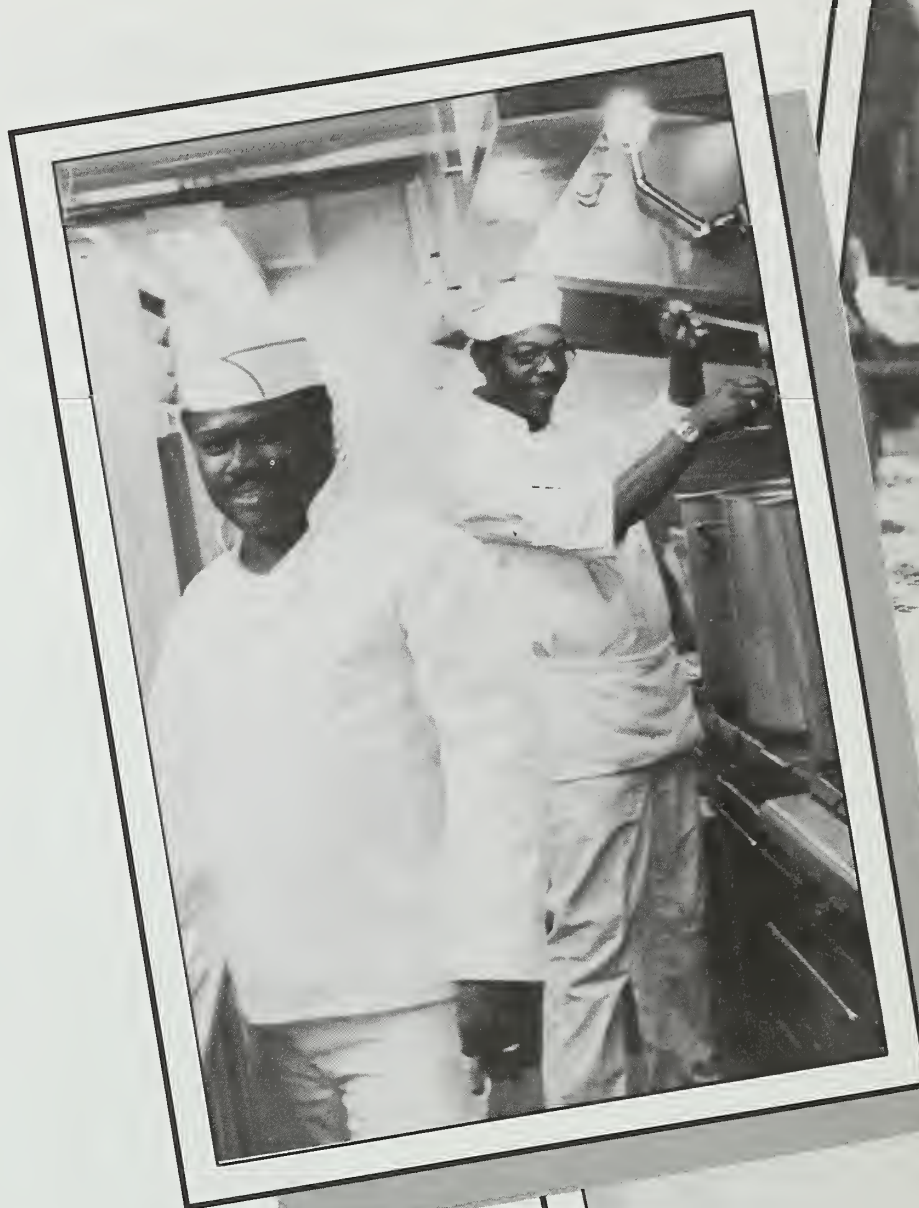
Also helpful are referrals to other work programs, such as the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (approximately 43 referrals are made to this program each year), and information on other sources of food help and social services.

Says one former Live-In staff person who has since found a job and a home outside the Inn: "The Live-In Program enabled me to regain some of my self-esteem. It gave me hope that everything wasn't over."

Permanent residence helpful to many

The Paul Sullivan Housing Trust, named in memory of the Inn's former executive director, was established in 1983. The goal of the program is to provide a stable, permanent residence for single men and women of limited means. Currently the Inn has about 80 units and hopes to have about 150 by the end of the year.

Mothers and children, as well as single adult men and women, benefit from services provided by the Pine Street Inn. More than 120 volunteer groups and individual volunteers, such as this elderly man (right), donate food for meals or help serve them. Pine Street's kitchen staff (below) have a busy schedule. The Inn serves two meals a day to more than 1,600 people.



"The program gives them a chance to reverse the circumstances that brought them to the shelter," says Rood. "It is the first step in the transitional process of going from the shelter environment to permanent housing."

Placement in the program is done on an individual basis, and work assignments are individually paced according to ability. Typical work assignments include making beds, serving meals, and cleaning. In exchange, Pine Street provides a room, meals, an hourly stipend, and counseling to help participants with addictions or mental illness.

Also helpful are referrals to other work programs, such as the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (approximately 43 referrals are made to this program each year), and information on other sources of food help and social services.

Says one former Live-In staff person who has since found a job and a home outside the Inn: "The Live-In Program enabled me to regain some of my self-esteem. It gave me hope that everything wasn't over."

Permanent residence helpful to many

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Mothers and children, as well as single adult men and women, benefit from services provided by the Pine Street Inn. More than 120 volunteer groups and individual volunteers, such as this elderly man (right), donate food for meals or help serve them. Pine Street's kitchen staff (below) have a busy schedule. The Inn serves two meals a day to more than 1,600 people.



When someone is placed in one of the housing units, a liaison counselor maintains regular contact with him or her until both agree that the transition from shelter to permanent housing has been completed. For many, this process requires several months of regular visits.

The Pine Street staff feel this support helps ensure that placements will be truly permanent, instead of having people reappear in the shelter system after living awhile on their own.

People who are placed in permanent housing are required to contribute one-fourth of their income whether it be from employment wages or veteran or disability benefits they receive. The counselors often help residents secure furniture, kitchen equipment, linens, and a supply of food through the Pine Street's network of donors. They also help residents transport everything on moving day.

The residence has live-in managers. Additional staff come in during the day to provide counseling; help with referrals to social service agencies, such as the local food stamp office; and make sure residents have transportation to appointments.

"We maintain communication with people in permanent housing for an indefinite period on an individual basis," says Rood. "The successes we have had with this program let us know we are on the right track."

"One man in particular comes to mind. He was the typical, disheveled, downcast homeless guest in the shelter. He was able to make the transition, and now he is in permanent housing. When you go to see him now, you are his guest. That is why we are here."

Women and children get special care

Recognizing the special needs of homeless women and children, Pine Street opened the Celeste House in May 1989. The Celeste House offers a 2-year comprehensive program of supportive transitional housing and services for women and their children.

The women in this program are chronic substance abusers. "Our efforts are to help these women turn their lives around and become self-sufficient so they will be capable of supporting themselves and caring for their children," says Blaise Flynn, administrator of Celeste House.

The house, provided by the Dominican Sisters, has accommodations for 12 women and their children. It is set

up to offer a wide range of educational and supportive services within a shared living context.

The women have their own rooms and share a kitchen. There is also a nursery and a school area where the women can study for the GED (General Equivalency Diploma from high school) and learn word processing.

The 24-hour staff coverage allows the women to live with their children in a safe and nurturing environment. Activities and supportive services—such as career counseling, tutoring, Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous, parent training, and recreation—help them rebuild their lives.

Since the women in the program are recovering from substance abuse, they have special nutrition needs, which are addressed. Proper diet is emphasized. USDA's WIC program plays a key role here since all of the women are either participating in WIC themselves or have children who are participating.

"We hope to be able to give these women the skills they will need to live full and productive lives," says Rood. "We won't know how successful we've been until the first woman is ready to leave the program, and that won't be for a while."

Working to heal as well as shelter

"We have success stories, but not as many as we would like given the tremendous magnitude of the homeless," he adds. "We are continually challenged to develop programs that not only meet the needs of the homeless but also help heal them."

"We believe the solution lies in more specialized programs; increased government assistance and affordable housing for the working poor; community-based residential programs for those with special needs; and in society's education of the realities of the homeless," says Rood.

"And that all begins with the basic knowledge that the homeless are not 'the homeless' but people who don't have homes."

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article by Cynthia Tackett
photos by Cynthia Tackett and
courtesy of the Pine Street Inn

Boosting Kids' Chances Of Going On To School

Virginia Day Care Center Gives Children Of Migrant Farmworkers A Head Start

Irma Guel never was a teenager. She became an adult at 15 when she married and had a child. You grow up fast in a migrant camp.

"My first baby was only 5 months old when I got pregnant with my second one," Guel says. "I had a hard time raising both of them. They might as well have been twins."

Guel, 23, her husband, and their three children make a yearly round trip from Florida to Virginia with their Mexican-American families to plant and harvest crops such as tomatoes and green beans. For these migrant farmworkers, wages are minimal, particu-

larly if the weather is inclement. Possessions are few, and many workers are undereducated.

Seeking more for their children

Improving their lives hasn't been easy for the Guels because of the ramifications of trying to break away from a lifestyle that's been passed from generation to generation.

But thanks to a Virginia day care center where two federal programs join forces, the Guels are hopeful for a better life.

It's at the Parksley Migrant Head

Start Center, on the 70-mile peninsula known as Virginia's Eastern Shore, that the two oldest Guel children received a special kind of guidance to prepare them for school.

Their 2-year-old brother is now attending the facility, which provides education, health care, and social activities to low-income children through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Head Start Program and nutritious meals through USDA's Child Care Food Program.

Coincidentally, Irma landed a job 2 years ago as an interpreter at the center, which serves a predominantly



Spanish-speaking population. This seasonal position in Virginia allows her to spend 6 months out of the year closer to her children.

"At least one parent needs to get out of the fields to teach the children that there's something better out there," she says.

The center has had a positive effect not only on Irma but on her children as well. "I feel good about leaving my child here," she says. "My baby is really too young to talk, but I think he likes it here. If he didn't, he wouldn't be too ready to get on the bus in the morning."

Irma says her son looks forward to mealtime at the center. The menus for breakfast and lunch follow federal guidelines to meet the nutritional needs of the children who attend the center.

Arts and crafts and food are not the only things the center has to ease a young parent's mind.

"I know there's always a nurse here," Irma says. "If my child needs some kind of medication or needs to be seen by a doctor, they always take care of it. I can go to work and know he is all right. Where else can I leave him unless I pay for a babysitter? And I can't afford that."

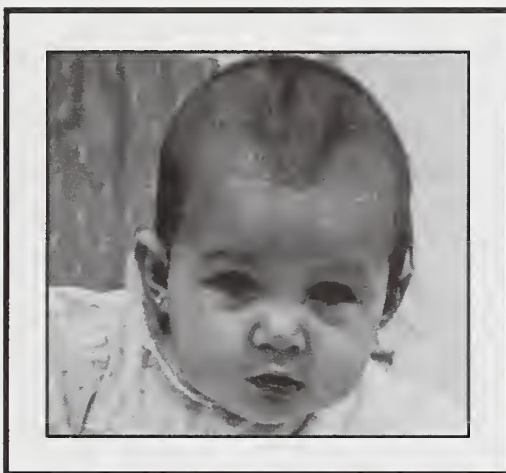
"I think a lot of parents feel more comfortable leaving their children here at the day care center."

"Home away from home" for 100 kids

Open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, the Parksley Migrant Head Start Center is a "home away from home" for some 100 kids.

A tall, old sycamore shades the Parksley Center's playground, where toddlers riding red and green scooters mimic truck sounds. Inside, infants sleep in cribs; a caregiver cradles one of them as though he were her own. Large letters made from blue construction paper read, "A baby needs hugs, kisses, cuddling, and most of all love." In another room, some wide-eyed preschoolers sit quietly, as a teacher reads one of their favorite stories.

It's close to lunchtime. Elizabeth and Daisey, the full-time cooks, have a large pot of homemade tomato and meat sauce simmering on the six-



At Parksley, a variety of activities help children learn, and meals are no exception. Staff members (left) sit with the children while they eat and explain why good food helps them grow and be healthy.

burner stove. They're cutting up fresh, locally grown carrots for the tossed salad. Pasta, green peas, french bread, and milk also will be offered to the kids, along with vanilla pudding for dessert.

But, things weren't always so idyllic.

"Children often were left in cars along the highway or in baskets in the fields while their parents worked," says Myron Miller, migrant Head Start director for the Virginia Council of Churches (VCC), which operates the center. "There was a need to have children in some place other than in the fields."

"The council, an organization of 13 major church groups in the state, began a ministry with migrant farm-workers in 1948 to help these folks who stayed a short time in the state and lived in labor camps pretty much apart from the community. Their major need was day care."

The VCC has a long history of helping migrant children at the Eastern Shore. VCC volunteers, for example, have taught reading and writing in places like chapels and migrant camps, which often weren't large enough and had no running water except for the rain that came in through leaky roofs. Miller, an ordained minister, had previously been involved with the migrant population in Florida when he was called to the VCC in 1956.

In 1974, VCC joined forces with East Coast Migrant Head Start, a grantee agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The corporation organizes and directs Head Start within delegate agencies. East Coast pays for the installation of plumbing, for example, which is required for a center to obtain a license to operate.

The Parksley facility, two other local centers, and one in northern Virginia built with VCC funds, also operate on state monies and by the council's in-kind contributions. They serve 295 children yearly through the Head Start and child care feeding programs.

Special care and food mean a lot

USDA's Child Care Food Program provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack each day.

Mealtime is not just a "time out," center director Joyce Petit-Dix explains. It's a meaningful social experience for the kids, who often don't have an opportunity to make a lot of friends because they relocate so frequently.

Since the ratio of staff to children is about one-to-four, the kids get a lot of attention at lunchtime. The employees sit and talk to them and explain why the good foods they get at the center are important to their growth.

Infants 8 weeks old to children up to 4 years old can participate in the programs at Parksley from June into November. An assessment, educational profile, and lesson plan are developed for each. Center staff are specially trained to keep track of the youngsters' progress.

"Ninety-nine percent of the time, they're not where they're supposed to be," says Petit-Dix. "Sometimes it might be because of a physical condition. Once we take care of those needs, we can bring them to where they should be and go forward."

The children get constant attention from the staff of 64, who see the day care facility as much more than a baby-sitting operation. While infants are guided through basic motor skills, toddlers listen to records and play with an abundance of toys. Older children watch puppet shows, push pee-wee size shopping carts through a make-believe grocery store, learn songs, fingerpaint, and prepare for the transition to public school.

An outreach worker at Parksley enrolls the kids, assesses each family's needs, and may refer them to other pro-

grams like USDA's Food Stamp Program and WIC (the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children).

The children must have a physical examination and be immunized before they are accepted at the center. Physicians from a Norfolk hospital check the children at the beginning of the program. The Delmarva Rural Ministries fills in afterwards.

First thing each day, the Parksley staff dress the children in clothing donated to the center, to save wear and tear on the kids' clothes. They record any changes they notice, such as the presence of lice, scratches, bites, runny noses, or bruises. Some of the children get baths and have their clothes laundered.

If a child needs medical attention, a note is sent to the parents asking them to either handle the problem themselves or give the center nurse permission to make an appointment for the child. Either way, the child cannot return to the center until he or she is well.

The Head Start facility provides transportation to the doctor and dentist. But first, center staff may have to drive around in the fields.

"We don't do anything to anyone's child without the parents being present," says Petit-Dix. "If we have to go into the fields to get them, we will do so. We have an understanding with the

farmers. If children are sick, they won't be allowed in the center; therefore, some parents are going to be home. If we're not taking care of their kids, how can the people work? The farmers need us."

Helping children go on to school

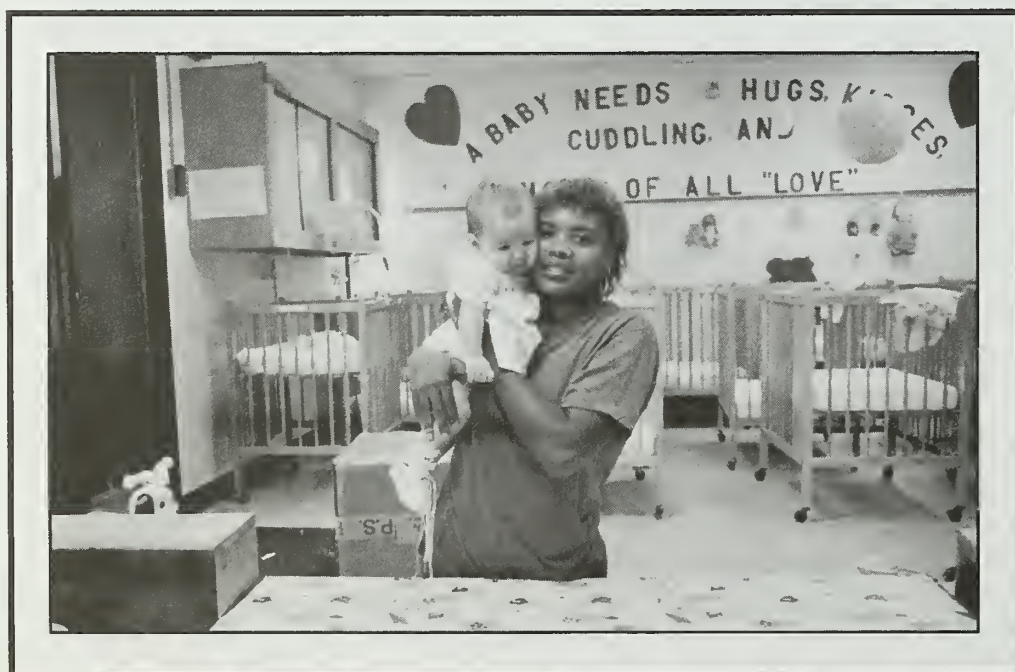
Health and scholastic records are forwarded to other migrant Head Start centers on the East Coast. It's this kind of groundwork that is building the kids' chances to go on to school.

"Traditionally, migrant kids missed out on education," says Miller. "In the early years, we had to beg the parents to let us take their children. They were reluctant to leave them with strangers. They seek us out now."

"The center's programs have made a significant improvement in the lives of the children. You can see how good food and a clean environment make a difference in just a few weeks."

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article and photos
by Marian Wig



As center director Joyce Petit-Dix (top right, opposite page) explains, activities and care are tailored to the needs of individual children. A favorite activity of the older children is



watching puppet shows. Here (bottom right), a staff member claps as a performance begins. Above: Cook Elizabeth Giddens cuts up fresh vegetables for lunch.

Food and Nutrition



Making Sure Children Get What They Need

Gila River Clinic Reaches Out To WIC Participants Needing Extra Care

In the Gila River Indian community in Central Arizona, all the children participating in WIC need the help the program offers. But some need a little more and get it because of a new clinic set up to help them and other children in the community with some very demanding health problems.

Gila River, about an hour's drive south of Phoenix, is the third largest Indian community in the United States. It is home to more than 10,000 people in 20 communities scattered across 374,000 acres.

Lynn Rusch, who oversees the Gila River WIC program as director of Maternal and Child Nutrition Services, says many of the young WIC participants have multiple problems that affect their nutritional status as well as their general health.

Some of the common problems Rusch and her staff see include low birth weight, "failure to thrive," cleft lip or palate, cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome, and severe obesity (150 percent or more of ideal weight).

Many of the children's mothers were diabetic or developed gestational diabetes during pregnancy, and some of the babies have associated risks, such as birth defects, brain damage, jaundice, and enlarged heart.

Coordination with local health professionals is essential to providing full care to these children and their families.

Variety of services offered at clinic

Last year, Rusch began working with staff at the reservation's new Hu Hu Kam Memorial Hospital to set up a clinic especially designed for children with special needs. Begun a year ago, it is called, appropriately, the Special Needs Clinic.

"We wanted to come up with a way to make it as easy as possible to provide

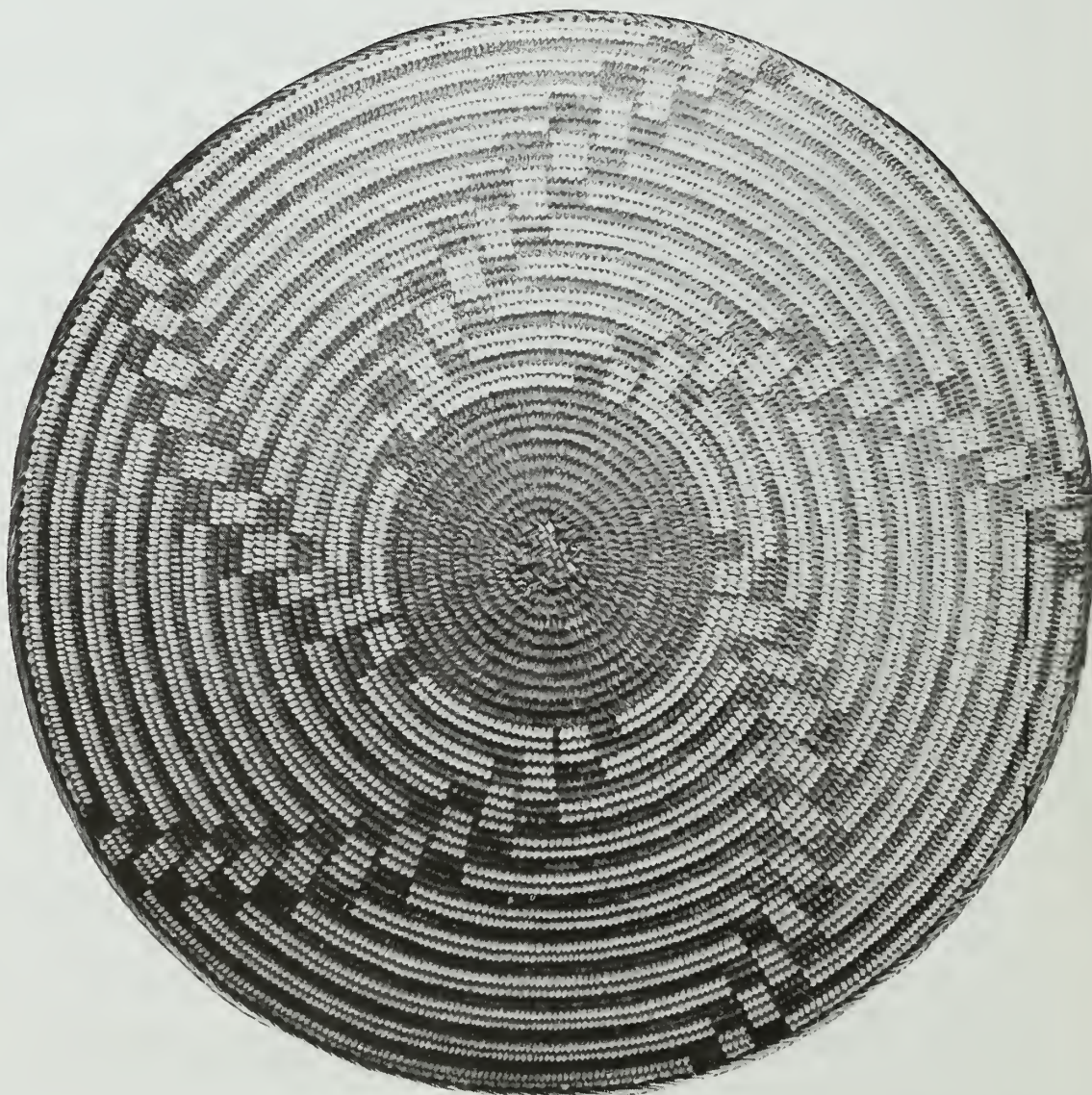
the best care we can," says Dr. Cindy Bowers, a staff physician at Hu Hu Kam Hospital. "We also wanted to make access to the health care system easier."

Working as a team, Dr. Bowers, Lynn Rusch, and Janet Corelli, assistant director of public health nursing, assess what treatment is indicated for each child referred to the clinic and decide how it can best be provided.

Rusch, a registered dietician with a nursing background as well, takes re-

sponsibility for issues related to diet and nutrition. She works closely with the hospital's physicians to evaluate children's feeding plans and makes sure their nutrition care is closely coordinated with the rest of their medical care.

Sometimes, a child may need to see a specialist and may be referred to the pediatrician who holds a clinic at the hospital for a half day monthly, or to the child psychologist, an occupational therapist, or other specialists.





The clinic's staff try to schedule patients' appointments as carefully as possible to eliminate extra trips for their families. Since transportation is sometimes a problem on the reservation, some families may not always come in if they have to make too many trips to the hospital.

Some children need to be referred to specialists or medical facilities outside the reservation. Many go to Phoenix to the Indian Medical Center or Children's Rehabilitative Services.

Care tailored to each child

"Andy" is one baby who started out with WIC and is now also being cared for through the Special Needs Clinic.

Andy's mom was only 13 years old when he was born. Although the baby appeared healthy at birth, a paraprofessional on the WIC staff noticed he wasn't breathing normally when he came in for his 2-month appointment, and noted that his weight gain was below normal. She referred Andy to Rusch, who scheduled the baby for an appointment at the Special Needs Clinic.

Spring 1990

Some of the young WIC participants at the Gila River Clinic may be distant cousins of these children, photographed in Sacaton, Arizona, nearly 90 years ago by photographer Frank Russell.

After careful evaluation, the clinic team referred Andy to a hospital in Phoenix for testing, where it was determined that he had cardiac problems and would indeed need special care.

After 2 weeks of treatment, he came home, and the team from the Special Needs Clinic coordinated with the medical staff in Phoenix to monitor and reinforce his care. Rusch worked closely with Andy's mother to carefully monitor his feeding and weight gain, including showing her how to mix the formula and food supplements prescribed to help Andy grow.

Because the baby was at high risk, Rusch saw Andy weekly, either at the WIC office or at the Special Needs Clinic. She also checked on him between office visits. When Rusch and her staff noticed that the baby was still not gaining weight in spite of their ef-

forts, Dr. Bowers again had him admitted to Phoenix for evaluation.

Andy's heart condition had worsened. He spent another 2 weeks at the hospital in Phoenix while the staff there stabilized his heart condition and weight gain.

Since Andy came back from his second trip, his mother has brought him to the Special Needs Clinic monthly, and to the WIC clinic weekly so that Rusch can continue to closely monitor his progress. "His heart works so hard, he burns up all the calories from the formula," Rusch explains.

WIC provides special formula

WIC provides Andy's special formula, which Rusch says, at about \$13 per can, the family couldn't afford on their own. To help Andy gain weight, doctors have added an easily digested, high-calorie oil to the formula and supplements he was already receiving.

This makes preparing Andy's formula even more complex. "Our role in showing Andy's mother how to prepare the formula and mix it with the supplements has been very important," says

Rusch. "It's a big responsibility for a 13-year-old."

WIC's role in identifying nutrition problems and related medical problems is also very important, she adds. Without WIC, some of the problems spotted during WIC appointments might go undetected.

After each clinic visit, the staff meets to discuss Andy's treatment and progress. They keep careful records to assist medical professionals at any facility that may need to help Andy in the future.

In addition, they share information on his case with field staff, such as public health nurses, social workers, or WIC staff members running the district WIC clinics. As with other Special Needs Clinic patients, they help follow up on Andy in a variety of ways, including

home visits. Home visits offer opportunities to work with members of the extended family to provide information and support.

Field workers also help keep Bowers, Rusch, and Corelli informed about the status of Andy's case, and alert them to potential problems. This is especially helpful when working with a family living in an area without phones.

Until there is no longer a need

Once a child is seen by the Special Needs Clinic, care is continued until there is no longer a need, or until the child outgrows the clinic.

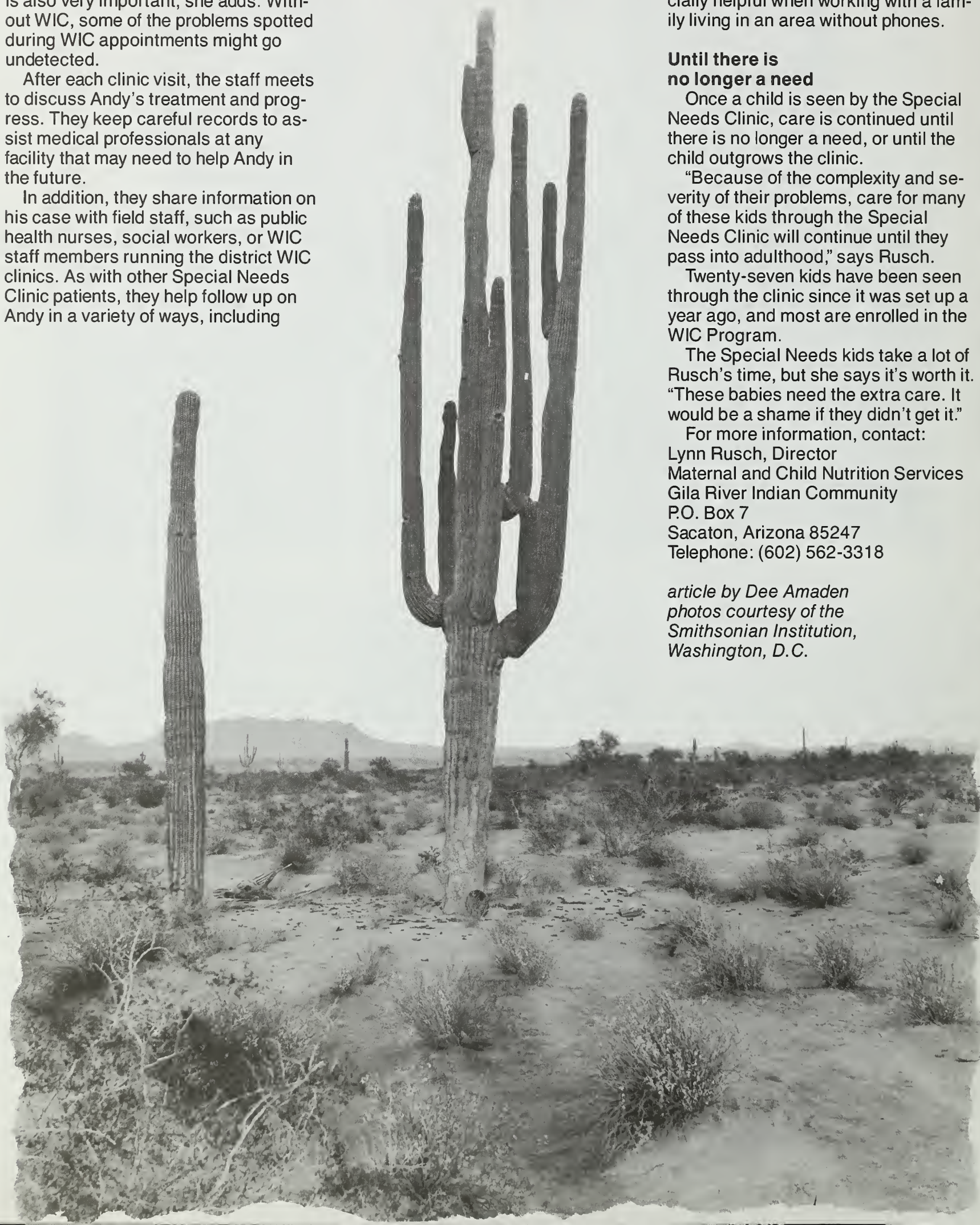
"Because of the complexity and severity of their problems, care for many of these kids through the Special Needs Clinic will continue until they pass into adulthood," says Rusch.

Twenty-seven kids have been seen through the clinic since it was set up a year ago, and most are enrolled in the WIC Program.

The Special Needs kids take a lot of Rusch's time, but she says it's worth it. "These babies need the extra care. It would be a shame if they didn't get it."

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*article by Dee Amaden
photos courtesy of the
Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.*



Helping Families Whose Lives Have Been Torn Apart

When Hurricane Hugo Strikes, Special Efforts Get Food Through To St. Croix

Hurricane Hugo ravaged St. Croix with near-tornado force winds for the better part of 12 hours on Sunday night and Monday morning, September 17 and 18.

Four days later, heavy rains ricocheted off the tarmac at the St. Croix airport. It was 3 a.m., Friday, September 22. Strong winds from the sudden storm began to loosen the tarpaulin covering pallets of USDA commodities earmarked for the island's disaster victims.

Just as the tarps began to billow, Jaime Rivera and Angel "Gabby" Matos, from the Food and Nutrition Service's Caribbean area office,

sprinted from the airport terminal, across the runway. They scaled the pallets and, in turn, forced out the air pockets and retied the protective covering around the precious cargo.

It took them nearly 3 hours to secure the pallets. Then, exhausted, drenched, and arm-weary, their day was about to begin.

Welcome to the world of disaster relief—St. Croix, Virgin Islands, edition.

"You do what needs to be done"

"You do what needs to be done," Rivera, director of the Caribbean area office, said. It was a sentiment often

repeated and most appropriate for the devastation that was St. Croix.

When it was all done, the combined federal, state, local, and volunteer food distribution effort resulted in more than 4 million meals for St. Croix disaster victims. There was an abundance of food and no shortage of people dedicated to get that food to those who desperately needed it.

"After the hurricane," said volunteer Wayne Kennedy, "there was nothing...no power, communications, water, food..."





That first night when Rivera and Matos secured what was to be the first of some 4.3 million pounds of USDA commodities sent by air and sea to St. Croix, the two had been sleeping on cots in a small office at the airport.

They had arrived that day from their Puerto Rico homeland, which also had been ravaged by Hurricane Hugo. Both had suffered damage to their homes. Rivera's wife had just delivered their third child, and Matos' wife was in her third trimester.

"It was not good timing, that's for sure," Matos said. "But what can you do? There was work to be done."

The work involved setting up the movement of food from the airstrip to a nearby holding area, then to a Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture warehouse and, finally, to food distribution sites set up throughout the island.

Coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Army's 18th Airborne unit, the Virgin Island National Guard, and the Red Cross helped resolve the transportation problems. The FNS area office staffers had the network operational in a short time.

Rivera and Matos were joined in St. Croix on September 29 by Steve Robbins, a food distribution supervisor from FNS' Mid-Atlantic regional office. If the early arrival by the FNS staff from Puerto Rico was responsible for jump starting the food relief effort on St. Croix, it was Robbins who fine-tuned the distribution machine.

Food arrived by air and sea

As food shipments began arriving in great volume, first by air and then by sea, vehicles and manpower were at a premium. Robbins' 3 weeks on St. Croix were a whirlwind of meetings, negotiations, and cajoling.

When food wasn't moving fast enough, it was not unusual to see Robbins join an aircraft cargo crew to pull pallets to the unloading doors, drive a 2½-ton truck loaded with commodities from the airstrip to the nearby marshalling area, or restack pallets that had been jostled inadvertently by a fork lift. Robbins, obviously, was another

Opposite page: At the airport, Steve Robbins, food program specialist for FNS' Mid-Atlantic regional office (right), and Virgin Islands commodity supervisor Winston Saddler make sure boxes of food are ready to be moved to the main distribution center.





who had that “do what needs to be done” attitude.

“It’s amazing. You work 16 to 18 hours a day and you feel disappointed that there’s not enough time,” he said. “Sundays are just like any other day. In fact, at the FEMA disaster assistance center, someone posted the day of the week on the bulletin board each morning. You just didn’t know what day it was because it was irrelevant.”

The long hours and hard work brought results. The 4.3 million pounds of USDA food were brought from the airstrips and docks to the central warehouse first by the U.S. Army, then by private contractors. The Virgin Islands National Guard and the Red Cross took care of the transportation to scores of sites, where local volunteers prepared meal packages from the 23 different kinds of commodities to distribute to friends and neighbors.

The effort paid off to the thousands

of St. Croix residents who fell victim to Hurricane Hugo. And, Robbins said, there was a great deal of personal satisfaction.

“When you go to a feeding site and you see the food that you’ve been killing yourself to get out there, and you see the smiles on people’s faces, that says it all. And that’s the difference between working a disaster situation and a normal nine-to-five job. That’s what makes it all worthwhile ultimately, and it’s a beautiful experience.”

The FNS crew gained support in their efforts with the arrival on September 23 of Winston Saddler, commodity supervisor with the Virgin Islands Department of Education. His knowledge of St. Croix as well as the business of food distribution was of immeasurable help in dispersing food throughout the island.

“Without Winston, the whole operation could have bogged down,” Rivera

said. “He kept us rolling, especially in dealing with local government officials.”

Saddler left his home on St. Thomas and travelled 4 hours on a barge to St. Croix, some 40 miles away. He had a few things in an overnight bag that served as his dresser and pillow for nearly 3 weeks. He slept on cots and chairs under leaking roofs and without electricity and water.

Rewards outweighed the discomforts

For Saddler, who spent whatever free time he could find driving around the island to make sure all food distribution sites and the people who came there were receiving commodities, the rewards were simple ones that far outweighed the discomforts.

“There were so many of my people who had nothing. I couldn’t believe it. It was very sad at first,” he said. “But we made a difference to a lot of people who

were really in need. That meant a great deal to me.

"I'll never forget what I saw there, both in terms of what happened because of the hurricane and what we were able to accomplish to help the people. Everyone worked so hard. I won't forget them either."

As food moved from port to warehouse to distribution site to homes, there were many players who gave selflessly and silently. Mary Bowen, head of the Red Cross operation on St. Croix, said, "You couldn't pay people for the kind of dedication we've seen."

Wayne Kennedy and George Kinder teamed up as Red Cross volunteers whose mission was to troubleshoot at the distribution sites on the western part of the island. They would be on the go from sunup to well after sundown transporting other volunteers to and from the sites, checking on the availability of food, and providing information to Red Cross operations headquarters.

Kennedy, a Los Angeles resident, operates his own construction business. When Hurricane Hugo swept through the Virgin Islands, he dropped a \$40,000 construction contract and signed on with the Red Cross to help in the disaster effort.

"I felt this is where I had to be," Kennedy said. "Work will be there when I get back."

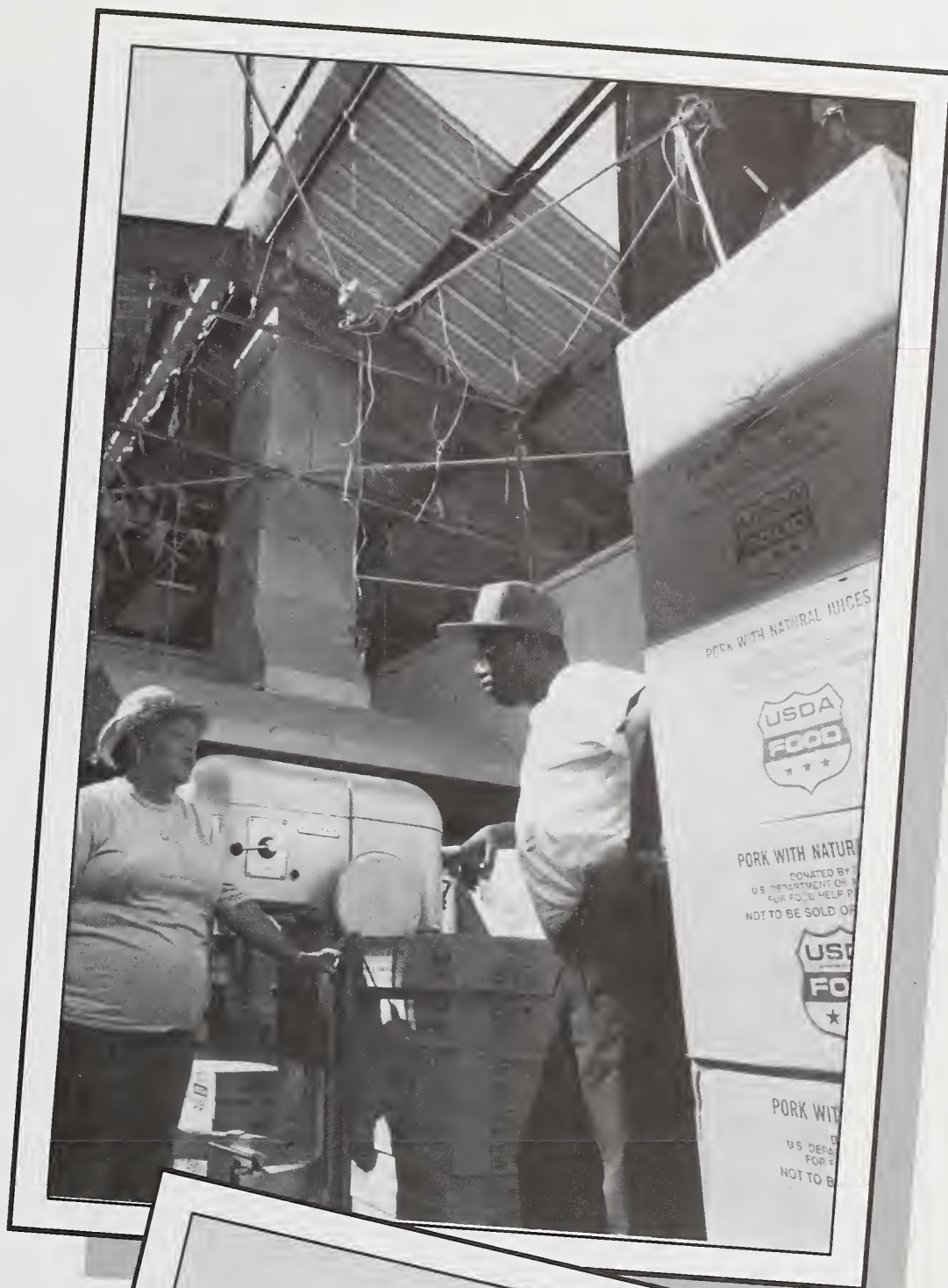
Hugo is his fourth disaster volunteer effort with Red Cross but "definitely the most devastating" in terms of destruction and hardship on those affected.

"This should be the case study from which all disaster relief personnel should be trained," Kennedy said, "because whatever could go wrong did go wrong. After the hurricane, there was nothing—no power, communications, water, food—and no immediate resources from which to draw support."

Opposite page: Virgin Islands Governor Alexander Farrelly (left) gets briefed on food distribution operations by Jaime Rivera and Angel "Gabby" Matos from FNS' Caribbean area office (right).

Top photo: Iris Medina (left), cafeteria worker at the Eulalie Rivera Elementary School, talks with Winston Saddler. Medina walked 2 miles to and from the school to help prepare meals.

Right: On St. Thomas, where Hurricane Hugo caused less destruction, emergency food stamps could be issued sooner than on St. Croix. Here, St. Thomas residents line up at the island's Department of Human Services.



Volunteers helped despite own losses

Kennedy's partner, George Kinder, didn't have to travel as far to be a Red Cross volunteer. Kinder retired from the Air Force 7 years ago and bought a small home on St. Croix.

The house was destroyed in the hurricane. But whatever sadness or dejection he felt was hidden behind a constant smile as he described his volunteer assignment.

"My wife and I weren't hurt. We're staying with friends, and there's nothing I can do about the house right now," Kinder explained. "So, I thought I'd come over to Red Cross to see if I could help. Wayne and I have been on the go ever since."

Like Kinder, there were many people from St. Croix who set aside personal tragedies to help in the relief effort. Teachers, especially, were at their closed schools helping dispense food packages to families.

And, there was Iris Medina, a school cafeteria worker at the Eulalie Rivera Elementary School in the Grove section of St. Croix. Her house was completely destroyed by the hurricane, and she was forced to move in with family in a nearby community.

Every day following the hurricane, she walked the 2 miles to and from the school, which was turned into a disaster and feeding center, to help prepare meals for people seeking help.

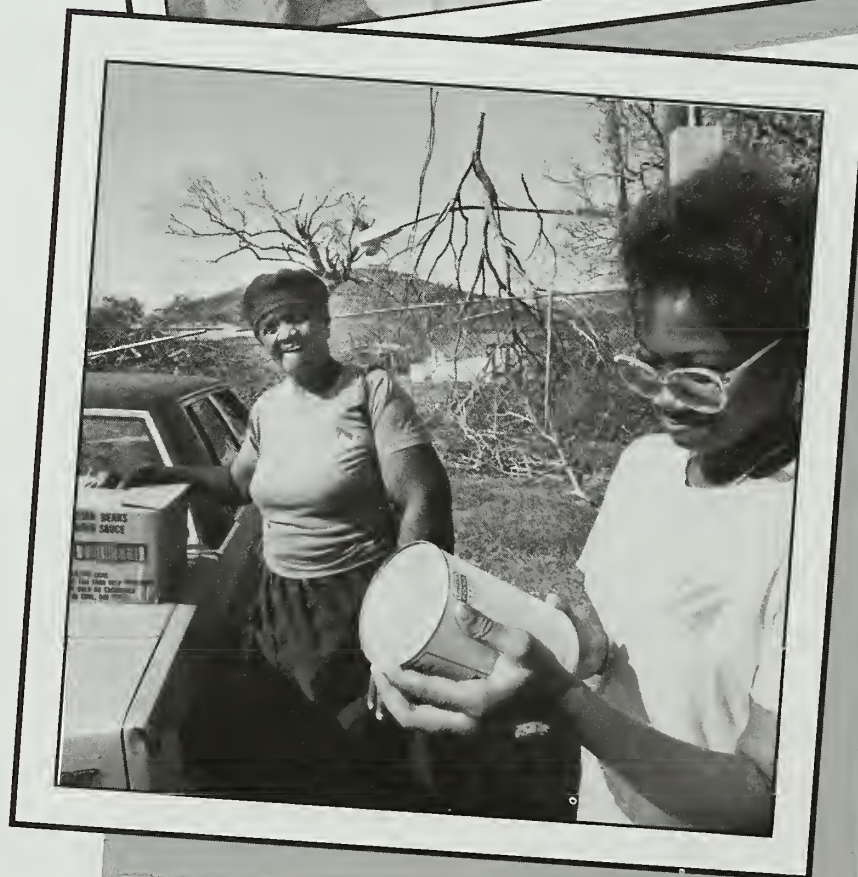
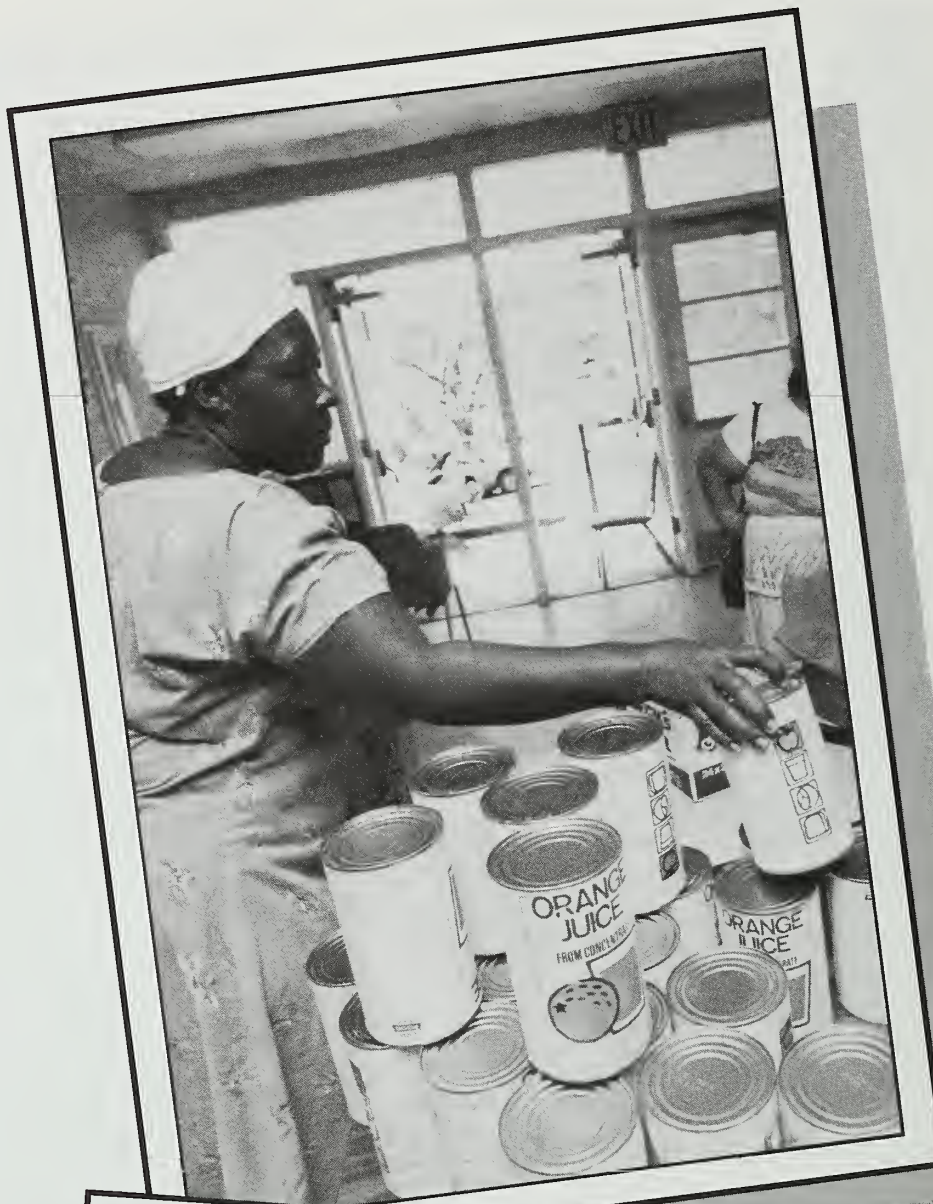
"We were able to use some of the food at the school along with some of the food that has come since," she said. "Everyone has been helping."

Medina described her experience during the hurricane as waiting out the initial part of the storm, then racing with many others during the eye of the hurricane to get to the school. "There were people running from all over, mothers with children, trying to get to the school," she said.

Meals provided almost immediately

Despite losing a large part of the roof that covered the school's kitchen, Medina said she and other members of the cafeteria staff were able to provide immediate meal service.

"Even though many people lost everything in the storm, they were here from day one serving the meals from what we had in the school—some USDA meat, fruit, and a lot of peanut butter," she said. "We gave the peanut butter to the kids and reminded them how nutritious it was."



Emergency shipments of canned pork, vegetarian beans, and orange juice were the first USDA commodities to arrive on the island of St. Croix following the storm.



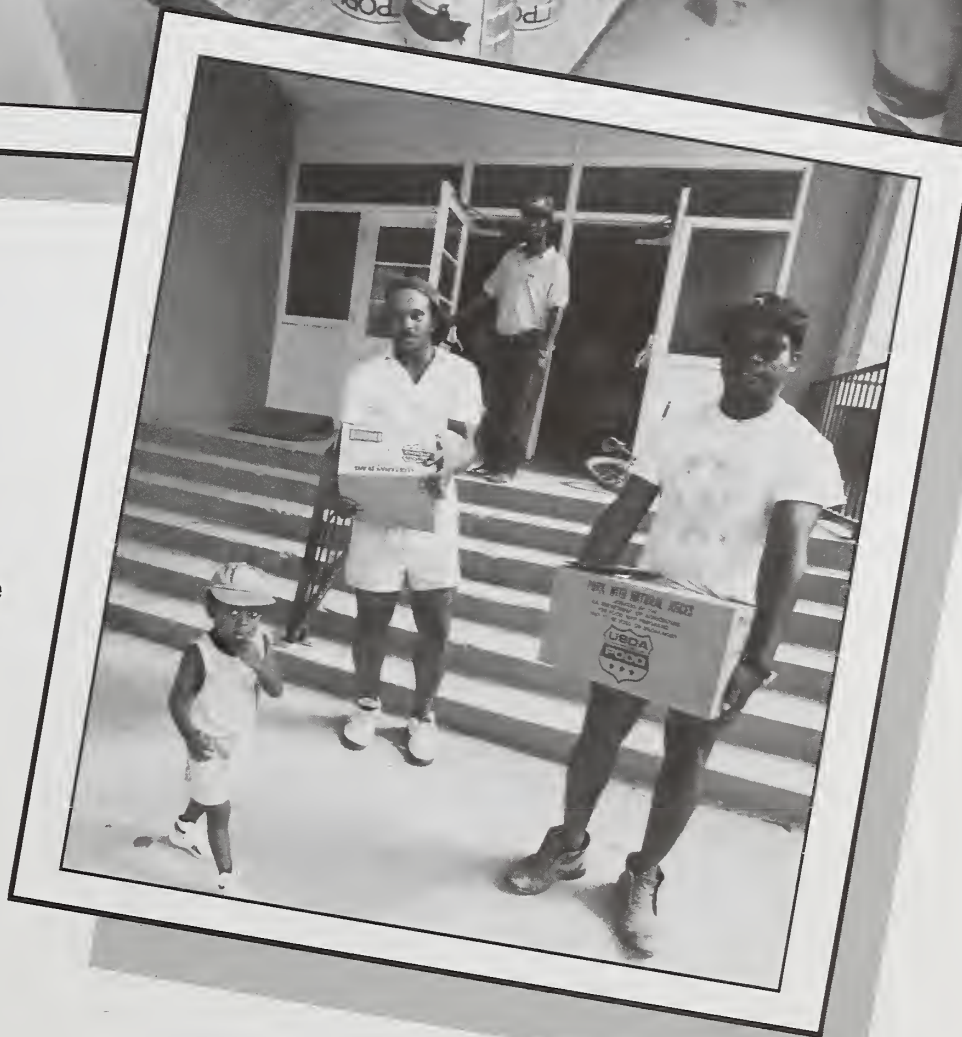
At one of the distribution sites (opposite page and above), volunteers stack cans of USDA food on tables. Right: Neighbors help each other carry boxes of food to their cars.

With school closed indefinitely, Medina expressed her concern for the children, a universal sentiment of school food service workers.

"We are worrying about the kids," she said. "We want them back in school."

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*article by Joe Dunphy
 photos by Larry Rana*



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